

## **Report of the Committee to Study the Admission Procedure in Engineering Colleges in Kerala**

The following Committee was constituted by the Kerala Higher Education Council *vide* Proceedings dated 15-10-2018, to look into the problems related to the Declining enrollment of students, in the Engineering Colleges in Kerala.

Dr R V G Menon, (Former Principal, Govt College of Engineering, Kannur) - Chairman

Dr R. Sasikumar, Director, Co-operative Academy of Professional Education

Dr Jiji, C.V., Principal, College of Engineering, Trivandrum

The Committee was assisted by the Prof. Rajan Varughese, Member Secretary, KSHEC

The Committee, at its first meeting deliberated on the various problems which were being reported in the media about admissions into the Engineering Colleges. Several Managers of Private Self Financing Colleges have complained that there is inordinate delay in the admissions process, with the result that many potential students are migrating to the neighbouring states. There was another complaint that the minimum marks prescribed for admission, namely, 50% for Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry together, and also a separate minimum 50% for Mathematics alone, detracts many potential students. The minimum prescribed 10 marks for Entrance Examination also denies entry to many potential students. There also have been suggestions that the separate Entrance Examination itself may be dispensed with, since there is, in practice, a system for normalizing the marks for all qualifying examinations. Hence, admission may be done based solely on the marks for the qualifying examinations.

The Committee examined all these aspects in its various sittings, and in consultation with experts from the related fields.

### **1. Can the Common Entrance Examination be eliminated?**

It is true that at present, a combination of the marks obtained in the Common Entrance Examination and also the marks scored (for Maths, Physics and Chemistry) in the Qualifying Examination are taken into account to prepare a Combined Rank List. The argument is that since there is a Rank List based on the marks scored in the Qualifying Examinations, the

separate Entrance Examination can be dispensed with. The Committee examined the Rank Lists prepared for the previous three years, namely, 2016, 2017 and 2018. As a matter of fact, The Committee asked that separate rank lists be prepared for each year, taking into account only the Rationalized marks for the Qualifying examinations, without considering the marks obtained in the Common entrance tests. The Committee wanted to compare the two sets of rank lists, with and without the Common Entrance Examinations scores. This is what we found. The following analysis refers to the results of the latest year, namely, 2018. We restricted our analysis to the top 5000 ranks only.

It was found that there was a severe disparity between the two sets of rank lists. Rank List 1 was based on the Combined marks in Qualifying Examination and the Entrance Test (as is being followed presently). The Rank List 2 was based on the Rationalized Marks of the Qualifying examinations (Kerala State Board, Other State Boards, CBSE). It was found that in Rank List 1, namely the Combined Rank List, as is practiced now, there were 60 CBSE stream students among the top 100 rankers. The number of Kerala State Board passers among them was only 34. The proportion of CBSE candidates was 61.4% among the top 500 in the Combined Rank List. The CBSE representation was 59.1% among the top 1000, and it was 55.3% among the top 2000. Among the top 5000 successful candidates, the CBSE proportion was 47.54%.

In Rank List 2 (based solely on Qualifying Examination marks) there were *none* from among the CBSE examination, among the top 100 successful candidates! 98% consisted of those who passed from the Kerala State Board Higher Secondary Examination. If the top 500 ranks are taken, the proportion of the CBSE students goes up to 1% only! The proportion goes up to 1.1% among the top 1000, and to 12.15% among the top 2000. The proportion is 47.54%, if the top 5000 ranks are taken.

This is very significant and tells us that doing away with the Common Entrance Examination will be very unfair to the students coming from the CBSE streams. For example, in the College of Engineering Trivandrum, which is usually best preferred by the top rankers, no CBSE stream student might get admitted!

## **2. Is there a case for doing away with the minimum prescribed marks for Common Entrance Examination?**

The minimum prescribed marks for the Common Entrance Examination is a measly 10 (out of 480) in each paper. This was prescribed long ago, when it was noticed that many students scoring zero (or even negative marks) in Maths were being admitted to the engineering courses. Admittedly, 10 out of 480 is not a significant check, still many candidates get disqualified on this score! The same argument goes for the prescribed minimum of 50% in Mathematics, which has **always** been prescribed for Engineering College admission in Kerala. The stark truth is that in spite of this restriction, students with very little capability in Mathematics get admitted and they fail in the Engineering Degree examinations. The present pass percentage for Engineering Degree Examination is below 40% in Kerala. If the admission standards are further lowered, even more students will fail in the degree examinations. This is not justified. On the other hand, it was noticed by the Committee that even the prescribed minimum of 50% in the Qualifying Examinations, is relaxed for those candidates seeking admission in the so called Management Quota. This is totally beyond reason. The prescribed minimum standards should be the same for all candidates, belonging to either General or Management quota. (This does not obviate the concessions extended to the SC / ST candidates).

However, in this context the committee would like to make the following recommendations so as to minimise the disadvantages in those students from rural areas who cannot afford expensive private tuition.

- a. The questions for the Competitive Entrance Examination should be based on the NCERT prescribed syllabus for Higher Secondary Courses.
- b. About 30% of the questions should be of comparatively lower standard so that the threat of scoring less than 10 marks can be minimised.

## **3. Can the admission process be accelerated?**

The Managers often complain that the admission process in Kerala is too drawn out and delayed. The Committee examined this aspect carefully, in consultation with experts from the Commissionerate of Entrance Examination. It was found that the last date prescribed by AICTE for finalizing Engineering College admissions is August 15, and the Kerala admissions

are invariably completed well before this date. Hence it is not correct to allege that there is any inordinate delay.

However, it was examined whether there was any means to further accelerate this admission process.

The results of the Kerala Board Examination are announced first, usually by the first week of June. The CBSE results come, usually by the 15th of June, and the Commissionerate for Entrance Examinations fixes 20th of June as the closing date for logging in the marks for the Qualifying Examinations. A provisional rank list will be ready by June 20th. The students are given 7 days to submit their options, and the First Allotment is announced by the 29th of June. The students are given about 4 days to pay fees in their chosen institutions and the First Round of admission is closed on July 4. The Second List is announced between July 5 and 8, and students have up to the 15th of June to join the selected colleges. The Rank List will be reopened on July 18th for the Third Round of admissions, which will be closed by July 25th.

This is the end of the General Allotment process, performed by the Commissionerate of Entrance Examinations. The vacancies, which might remain in the Government / Aided Colleges, on account of students leaving for IITs, NITs or Medical Colleges, will be filled later. The Self Financing Colleges are free to fill up vacancies by direct admissions from the Common Rank List, as per ranks. However, the Government Sponsored Self Financing Colleges are not allowed to do this. This is a point of complaint from among them.

### **Can anything be done to accelerate this process?**

It is a fact that the number of students seeking admission to the engineering colleges has declined in the last few years. This is true, not only in Kerala, but all over India. The reasons are many and are beyond the scope of government control. Yet, it is found that the best colleges in Kerala get their seats filled up and the weaker ones are suffering most. This is also natural. The pleas to lower the admission standards, so as to allow lesser qualified students to come to engineering colleges is ill advised, and this Committee does not see any merit in this argument. On the other hand, this Committee strongly argues that the present admissions specifications, namely, 50% minimum for Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry together, and separate 50% minimum for Mathematics, should be insisted for all students in the General as well as Management quota seats.

The Government formulates its policies only holding the interests of students paramount, and it is generous enough to allow any student who gets admission to IITs, NITs or Medical Colleges, to leave without trouble. The resulting vacancies are allowed to be filled up by transfer, on request. This Committee recommends that the Government Sponsored Self Financing Colleges also should be allowed to fill such vacancies by transfer, on request, following the same procedure as is being done by the Private Self Financing Colleges.

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